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SENATE JOINT RESOLUTION 791  
By Haynes

A RESOLUTION to honor and celebrate the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of  
the radio station, WSM.

WHEREAS, it is fitting that the members of this General Assembly should pause to specially recognize those estimable organizations and individuals whose contributions to the music industry have distinguished this great state the world over; and

WHEREAS, this year, the people who are affiliated with the pioneering radio station, WSM, will celebrate 75 years of positive influence in the community, reflecting on the past, giving thanks for the present, and eagerly anticipating the future; and

WHEREAS, through their prodigious service, the employees of WSM, both past and present, have contributed significantly to the growth and prosperity of this state and its local economies; and

WHEREAS, WSM first hit the airwaves on October 5, 1925, and was originally owned by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company. The radio station derived its name from the first letter of each word of its owner's motto, "We Shield Millions"; and

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WHEREAS, within two months of its debut, WSM launched a program that would give the station and Nashville worldwide fame, "The WSM Barn Dance," which later became known as "The Grand Ole Opry"; and

WHEREAS, part of the early success of "The Grand Ole Opry" may be attributed to WSM's formidable signal which enabled the station to be heard over much of North America; and

WHEREAS, established in 1932 after the Federal Radio Act of 1928 gave WSM one of the "clear channels" on the broadcast band, the new 50,000-watt transmitting facility is distinguished by its 878-foot, diamond-shaped tower; and

WHEREAS, as the program grew in popularity, "The Grand Ole Opry" gradually changed its venue from that of a rural, string band-oriented show to centering around the professional entertainer, attracting legendary country music artists such as, Roy Acuff, Bill Monroe, Minnie Pearl, Ernest Tubb, Red Foley, and Kitty Wells. It continues to attract some of the most popular artists of today, including Reba McEntire, Clint Black, Alan Jackson, Randy Travis, and Diamond Rio; and

WHEREAS, after several location changes, WSM signed an agreement in 1943 to reserve the Ryman Auditorium every Saturday night to broadcast "The Grand Ole Opry"; the show continued to broadcast at the Ryman Auditorium until 1974, dubbing the Ryman Auditorium as "The Grand Ole Opry House"; and

WHEREAS, in 1969, WSM acquisitioned land for the construction of a performance hall especially designed for "The Grand Ole Opry," in addition to a theme park that became "Opryland"; and

WHEREAS, in 1974, construction of "The New Grand Ole Opry House" and Opryland was completed and became staples in Nashville tourism for the next 25 years; and

WHEREAS, since its debut in 1928, WSM has broadcast "The Grand Ole Opry" every Saturday night without fail and has modified its broadcast only twice; and

WHEREAS, from 1939 until 1960, WSM carried a segment of "The Grand Ole Opry" to the nation by NBC radio, turning the show into a national showcase for country music talent; and

WHEREAS, WSM continued to produce many other musical programs during its illustrious tenure on the airwaves, many carried nationally; and

WHEREAS, WSM's love of live music over the years has caused the station to employ literally hundreds of musicians, arrangers, and vocalists. This concentration of musical talent in one place was a catalyst in bringing Nashville into the American spotlight as a music center; and

WHEREAS, as a way of promoting its staff of entertainers, WSM launched its "Artists' Service Bureau" in the early 1930s, which was Nashville's first talent agency; and

WHEREAS, in the early 1940s, WSM staff arranger, Fred Rose, and legendary artist, Roy Acuff, teamed up to found Nashville's first non-religious music publishing company, the Acuff-Rose Music Publishing Company. This firm became incredibly successful and signed songwriters that would become legends in the Nashville music industry, including Hank Williams and Roy Orbison. Songs such as, the "Tennessee Waltz," "Hey Good Lookin'," "Bye Bye Love," and "Oh Pretty Woman" are just some of the countless classics that were published by the pivotal company. The Acuff-Rose Music Publishing Company was eventually purchased by Gaylord Entertainment, WSM's current parent company; and

WHEREAS, beginning in 1944, commercial recording was done at WSM Studios as part of a venture of three WSM engineers, George Reynolds, Aaron Shelton, and Carl Jenkins. This enterprise became known as the Castle Recording Laboratory (The Air Castle of the South) and was Nashville's first recording studio. The vast majority of country music's hit records, in addition to some pop music hits, were recorded by Castle; and

WHEREAS, WSM announcer, David Cobb, was the first person who dubbed Nashville as "Music City USA" during an ad-libbed comment on the "Red Foley Show" in 1950; and

WHEREAS, the pioneering WSM radio station launched the country's first commercial FM radio station, W47NV, in 1941, which was renamed WSM-FM; and

WHEREAS, WSM boasts a first-rate technical operation, implementing the latest in radio technology under the direction of past engineer and president, Jack DeWitt, including over-the-air facsimile transmission, microwave relay systems, FM radio, and television; and

WHEREAS, the distinct WSM radio transmitter in Brentwood was frequently the location of radio-and electronic related experiments, and under the astute leadership of Jack DeWitt, the WSM transmitter was the first to successfully bounce a radio transmission off of the moon, paving the way for satellite technologies of today; and

WHEREAS, on September 30, 1950, WSM brought Middle Tennessee its first television station, WSM-TV, Channel 4. The television station was a part of WSM until it was sold in 1981, to make way for the launch of the Nashville Network (TNN). WSM expanded its television spectrum to establish another network, Country Music Television (CMT); and

WHEREAS, WSM has always exhibited an unparalleled commitment to serving its listeners in areas beyond communications and outside of Middle Tennessee. A sterling example of this dedication was seen when the Ohio River flooded in the late 1930s, devastating Louisville, Kentucky, and WSM lent its facility to Louisville's WHAS Radio so emergency messages and information could be broadcast; and

WHEREAS, WSM has remained one of America's premier news operations since the 1930s and is one of the largest radio news operations in the South, today; and

WHEREAS, the heralded radio station has earned a number of prestigious awards in recognition of its superior efforts in the fields of news and public affairs, including the coveted George Foster Peabody Award, the Scripps-Howard Award, the Nab Crystal Award, and the Edward R. Murrow Award; and

WHEREAS, this General Assembly finds it appropriate to pause in its deliberations to acknowledge and applaud WSM and its praiseworthy employees for their countless

contributions to the music and communications industries, to the city of Nashville, and to the Volunteer State; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE SENATE OF THE ONE HUNDRED FIRST GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES CONCURRING, That we hereby congratulate the radio station, WSM, and its employees of the past and present, on 75 years of superb service, and extend to them our best wishes in all future endeavors.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, That an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.